

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 02090 212101Z
ACTION EUR-12

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INFO USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 02090

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, CU, CA
SUBJECT: GOC AID POLICY TOWARDS CUBA: IN LIMBO

REF: OTTAWA 1494

1. CANADIAN POLICY TOWARDS CUBA, AT LEAST AS TO AID, IS PRESENTLY IN STATE FOF LIMBO FOR VARIETY OF REASONS. THIS WAS GENERAL IMPRESSION EMBOFF RECEIVED AFTER APRIL 20 DISCUSSION WITH FRASER, ACTING DIR. OF LA DIV., EXTAFF, AND EXTAFF CUBAN DESK OFFICER.
2. CANADIAN AID PACKAGE (10 MILLION LINE OF CREDIT AND ABOUT 4 AND 1/2 MILLION TECH ASSISTANCE) ENDED AS OF MARCH 31. CUBANS HAVE COME IN WITH NEW SHOPPING LIST, FRASER SAID, AND GOC HAS INDICATED TO THEM THAT IT IS "STUDYING" MATTER. IN FACT, FRASER CONFIDED, "STUDYING" IS EUPHUMISM FOR NO ACTION AT ALL BECAUSE OF PRESENT POLITICAL CLIMATE HERE.
3. MODEST AS GOC AID WAS, TRUDEAU GOV HAS BEEN UNDER STRONG ATTACK FROM OPPOSITION TORY PARTY IN HOUSE OF COMMONS FOR SYMPATHETIC STANCE VIS A VIS CUBA (TRUDEAU'S "VIVA CASTRO")

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 OTTAWA 02090 212101Z

REMARK REMAINS A RALLYING CRY--FOR THE OPPOSITION) WHILE CUBA WHEELS AND DEALS IN AFRICA. FRASER STATED PERSONAL OPINION THAT TORY CRITICISM REFLECTS SENTIMENT OF MANY CANADIANS. IN ANY CASE, HE INDICATED THAT GOVERNMENT IS SENSITIVE TO THIS CRITICISM AND THAT THERE WILL BE NO MOVEMENT ON A POSSIBLE NEW CUBAN AID PACKAGE UNTIL AFTER COMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ELECTIONS,

HE SAID, IS HARD TO PREDICT.

4. FRASER ASSERTED THAT SOME GOC AID TO CUBA MAY BE CRUCIAL IN KEEPING OPEN A "WINDOW" IN HAVANA, AND HE ADDED THAT THIS SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO THE U.S. WHICH HAS BENEFITTED FROM CANADIAN EMBASSY ACCESS IN CUBA. DISCONTINUING OR DRASTICALLY CUTTING GOC AID COULD, HE CLAIMED, CAUSE CUBAN BACKLASH AGAINST GOC TO DETRIMENT OF BOTH GOC AND U.S. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS LESS ALTRUISTIC CANADIAN MOTIVE INVOLVED SINCE CANADA RUNS 4 TO 1 FAVORABLE TRADE BALANCE WITH CUBA. FRASER EXPRESSED INTEREST IN US VIEWS ON POSSIBLE GOC AID TO CUBA AND CLAIMED THAT SUCH VIEWS WOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AFTER ELECTIONS WHEN MATTER IS CONSIDERED BY GOC.

5. COMMENT: TRUDEAU GOV CLEARLY IS FEELING THE HEAT ON CUBAN QUESTION AND THE LESS SAID ON IT DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN THE BETTER FOR THEIR PURPOSES. TO LIMIT DAMAGE, EXTAFF MIN JAMIESON HAS TAKEN PAINS TO OUTLINE PUBLICLY GOC DISSATISFACTION WITH CUBAN AFRICAN ADVENTURES. MOST RECENTLY IN HOUSE ON APRIL 18, HE SAID THAT, "WE DEPLORE UNEQUIVOCALLY THE PRESENCE OF CUBAN FORCES IN AFRICA OR ANYWHERE ELSE WHERE THERE ARE TROUBLES OF THAT KIND." HE HAS AVOIDED, HOWEVER, TIEING AID QUESTION TO CUBAN AFRICAN PRESENCE. SIMILARLY, AT APRIL 20 PRESS CONFERENCE, IN ANSWER TO QUESTION ON CUBA, TRUDEAU INDICATED THAT GOC DID CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 OTTAWA 02090 212101Z

NOT LINK HUMANITARIAN AID AND POLITICS OF RECIPIENT COUNTRY. BUT HE KEPT HIS ANSWER VAGUE AND LOW-KEY.

6. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ELECTIONS IS INDEED HARD TO PREDICT. IN UNLIKELY EVENT THAT TORIES TAKE POWER, GOC-CUBAN RELATIONS WILL COOL (REFTEL). EVEN WITH TORIES, HOWEVER, RELATIONS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO DETERIORATE TO POINT WHERE FAVORABLE GOC TRADE IS JEOPARDIZED. AND SOME AID MAY BE PRICE FOR THIS. SHOULD TRUDEAU RETURN, WE ESTIMATE THAT, DESPITE TRUDEAU'S PERSONAL FASCINATION WITH CASTRO AND GOC LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH CUBA, NEW TRUDEAU GOV WILL AVOID HIGH-PROFILE RELATIONSHIP AS LONG AS CUBA IS ACTIVE IN AFRICA. MOST LIKELY, HOWEVER, IT WILL CONTINUE MODEST AID PROGRAM. END COMMENT.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: WHILE THERE WILL BE NO GOC MDVES TOWARDS CUBA UNTIL FALL AT EARLIEST (ELECTIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE HELD BY THEN), WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY DEPARTMENT THINKING ON THIS SUBJECT FOR POSSIBLE DISCUSSION WITH EXTAFF OFFICIALS.
ENDERS

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